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The Acquisition of English as a Second Language: V-raising Parameter Resetting by Spanish Native Speakers

Treball de Fi de Grau/BA Dissertation

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List of Acronyms

LA = Language Acquisition

L1/L2 = First/Second Language

L1A/L2A = First/Second Language Acquisition

UG = Universal Grammar

P&P = Principles and Parameters

V-Raising = Verb Raising

AVO = Adverb-Verb-Object

VAO = Verb-Adverb-Object

1. Abstract

Within the generative framework of language acquisition, several theories have been proposed in order to find out whether there is L1 transfer and UG access in L2A or not. This paper sets out to see if evidence in favour of Full Transfer/Full Access can be found in Verb-raising parameter resetting. The study draws its data from an experiment conducted with 28 Spanish and Catalan bilingual students of English and 10 English native speakers who comprise the control group. The participants are divided into two groups according to age and level of English because L1 transfer and UG access are variables that affect the initial stage of L2A and interlanguage development respectively. The experiment consists of an acceptability judgement task which contains sentences with preverbal and postverbal adverb placement. The acceptability of preverbal adverbs indicates a negative setting of the V-raising parameter whereas the acceptance of postverbal adverbs signals its positive value. Since English is a -V-raising language and Spanish is a hybrid language, i. e. it allows for both the positive and negative settings in some constructions, my hypothesis is that pre-A1 learners of English will accept both preverbal and postverbal adverbs whereas B2 students will accept preverbal adverbs but discard postverbal adverb placement. The results obtained in this study not only support my hypothesis but also provide evidence in favour of Full Transfer/Full Access and hence parameter resetting.

Keywords: L1 transfer, UG access, L2A, Full Access/Full Transfer, Verb-raising, parameter resetting, adverb placement.

2. Introduction

According to generative linguistics, all humans are endowed with an innate language faculty. This language faculty contains a mechanism known as Universal Grammar whose role is to guide humans through the process of language acquisition by means of providing them with an innate set of linguistic rules. These rules, however, can be of two different kinds. Whereas principles are linguistic universals, parameters are language-particular variables. Therefore, principles and parameters play a different role in the process of L2A. Since principles are common to all languages, they do not pose any problem for the acquisition of a new language. On the contrary, parameters, which are two-valued options, do present some complications for learning a second language. This is due to the fact that parameters are set to their corresponding value (negative or positive) in the L1, which might not be the same in the L2. In this case, the value of the parameters has to be reassessed and possibly switched, which is known as parameter resetting.

Parameter resetting is a key concept in the study of L2A because there is discrepancy among scholars on whether parameters can be reset to target-like values or not. For this reason, the process of L2A has been analysed according to two main variables. On the one hand, L1 transfer refers to the transference of parametric values to the L2 initial grammar. On the other hand, UG access makes reference to the acquirers' direct access to UG in L2A, which allows them to reset parameters.

The main aim of this study is to find out whether the Full Transfer/Full Access theory (Schwartz & Sprouse 1994, 1996) makes the right predictions about L2A by means of analysing Verb Raising parameter resetting by Spanish-speaking learners of English. The V-raising parameter is a two-valued variable that constrains different word orders

across languages. It is characterised by the movement of the verb from its original V position to a higher functional category known as Inflection or Tense. The realisation of this parameter is revealed in a range of constructions such as negation, adverb placement and questions. While the main features of +V-raising languages are post-verbal negation, post-verbal adverb placement and Subject-Verb inversion; -V-raising languages are characterised by preverbal negation, preverbal adverb placement and SV order in interrogatives (White 2003).

Even though a considerable amount of research on V-raising parameter resetting has been conducted, most authors have analysed the two prototypical languages corresponding to each of its values: French as a +V-raising language and English as -V-raising. Precisely for this reason, it is relevant for the field to carry out research on the behaviour of V-raising and parameter resetting in other languages such as Spanish. Moreover, Spanish is particularly interesting in terms of V-raising because in some constructions such as adverb placement and Subject-Verb inversion it allows both orders, which has been taken as evidence of a hybrid setting (Ayoun 1999b).

For these reasons, the objective of this study is to analyse Spanish native speakers' judgements of English sentences which contain either preverbal or postverbal adverbs in order to observe whether they opt for the L1 or the target-like setting. Moreover, participants are divided into two groups according to age and level of English so that L1 transfer, which takes place in the initial state of L2, and UG access, which corresponds to interlanguage development, can also be examined according to their degree of acceptance of preverbal or postverbal adverb placement. My hypothesis is that young pre-A1 learners of English will accept both preverbal and postverbal adverbs, which corresponds to the mixed value of the V-raising parameter in Spanish and supports L1 transfer; whereas older B2 students will accept preverbal adverbs but discard postverbal adverb placement,

which coincides with the negative value of the parameter in English and supports not only UG access but also parameter resetting.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. L2 Acquisition: Principles and Parameters

Since the 1980s, several approaches towards the study of L2A have been proposed. The framework that will be adopted in this thesis is Generativism, which was first introduced by Noam Chomsky (1981) and is based on the Theory of Universal Grammar and the Theory of Principles and Parameters.

The theory of UG argues that "children are genetically endowed with a Language Faculty which provides them with innate knowledge of universal aspects of grammar" (Radford, 2004: 30). In other words, humans are born with an innate set of structural rules which is independent of sensory experience. This UG "defines the search for grammar construction and the format for possible grammars [as well as] guides children in the process of attending to, selecting and processing input" (Montrul, 2004: 3).

The theory of P&P argues that UG is comprised of principles, linguistic universals, and parameters, cross-linguistic variables. Hence, principles are general rules common to all languages, such as 'every sentence must have a subject' (Extended Projection Principle). In contrast, parameters are two-valued constraints that reduce "the range of structural variation between languages and limit it to a simple binary choice" (Radford 2004: 36). An example of a parameter is the Null Subject Parameter, which justifies why some languages require an explicit subject in main clauses whereas others do not, depending on whether they have a positive or negative value of this parameter.

Principles and parameters are relevant to the process of language acquisition because they "constrain the form and functioning of grammar, and place limits both on the inventory of possible categories and on how these categories are assembled or combined" (Montrul 2004: 7). However, there are some differences on how principles and parameters guide children towards the process of language acquisition. Whereas principles are fixed and invariable norms, parameters are two-valued constraints from which the acquirer has to choose one option. In other words, according to the generative framework, acquiring or learning a language involves "setting parameters to target-values" (Eisenbeiss 2009: 279). However, although parametric values are fixed in an L1 once they are set, they might be switched in the development of interlanguages. This operation, known as parameter resetting, refers to the process of maintaining or changing the parametric values that have been set in the L1 depending on the input of the L2.

Even though the concepts of principle and parameter have been widely accepted in the field of generative grammar, there is discrepancy on whether the process of parameter resetting is possible or not. On the one hand, there are some authors who argue that interlanguage grammars are constrained by the parameter settings realised in the L1 and new parameter values cannot be acquired in the L2. On the other hand, other scholars suggest that L2 learners have direct access to UG and hence are able to reset parameters to target-like values. Therefore, some authors such as Hawkins and Chan (1997, cited in White 2003: 127) have found evidence for L1-based analyses in interlanguage grammars, while others such as Epstein et al. (1996, cited in White 2003: 127) have demonstrated the possibility of eventual parameter resetting in the process of L2A.

3.2. Theories on L1 transfer and UG access

Most of the research that has been carried out regarding parameter resetting has focused on two main variables: L1 transfer and UG access. They account for "the extent of presumed involvement of the L1 grammar [in L2A] and the extent to which the UG constrains interlanguage representations" (White, 2000: 133). These two variables are crucial for the study of L2A because they make predictions about how the mental representation of an L2 looks like in the different stages of L2A and about whether this representation changes throughout the developmental process or not. In other words, L1 transfer and UG access are strongly related to the initial and final state of L2A, as well as the processes L2 learners undergo and the mechanisms they use. For this reason, various theories on L2A with different values on these two variables have been proposed. On the one hand, it has been argued whether there is full, partial or no L1 transfer, which makes reference to the initial stage of L2A and the transfer of parametrical values from the L1 to the L2. On the other hand, it has been discussed whether there is full, partial or no UG access, which refers to later stages of interlanguage development and the possibility of parameter resetting.

Firstly, Full Transfer/Partial Access is the position that suggests that "the L2 initial state consists of the L1 final state [and the] properties of UG not instantiated in the L1 are not available in the L2" (White, 2000: 134). In other words, there is access to UG but only through the settings of the L1. This theory was proposed by Schwartz and Sprouse (1996) and it is also known as the "no-parameter resetting" hypothesis. This is due to the fact that this theory does not account for new parameter settings in the development of interlanguage grammars. Consequently, in terms of ultimate attainment, Full Transfer/Partial Access predicts that L2 grammars are necessarily different from the grammar of a native speaker.

Secondly, No Transfer/Full Access assumes that "the L2 grammar is acquired on the basis of UG principles and parameters interacting directly with L2 input" (White 2000: 135). Hence, the L1 and the L2 are completely independent from each other and UG constitutes the initial state for both L1A and L2A. This theory has been defended by authors such as Epstein, Flynn & Martohardjono (1996), who argue that since there is direct access to UG in L2A, parameter resetting and native-like language proficiency are possible.

Thirdly, Full Transfer/Full Access holds that the L1 grammar is the initial state of the L2A process, but those properties not present in the L1 are still available via direct access to UG. This position was put forth by Schwartz and Sprouse (1994, 1996), who argue that parametric values are transferred from the L1 but might be reset in response to L2 input. Nevertheless, it might be the case that L2 learners do not acquire a native-like competence because properties of the L1 might have a stronger influence than UG.

Fourthly, Partial Transfer/Full Access argues that the L2 initial state is based on properties of both the L1 and UG simultaneously. This theory is supported by Vainikka and Young-Scholten (1994), who propose that "L1 lexical categories are found in the initial state of L2 grammar [but] functional categories are not" (White 2000: 138). However, in later stages of interlanguage development, L2 learners are assumed to gradually project functional categories. Therefore, this theory accounts for both parameter resetting and native-like competence in L2A.

Finally, Partial Transfer/Partial Access claims that "L2 grammars are permanently impaired in a local domain, [which leads to] a range of consequences not found in L1 grammars" (White 2000: 138). This theory has been put forward by Eubank, Beck and Aboutaj (1997), who defend that parameter resetting is not possible and ultimate attainment in L2A is necessarily non-native-like.

In light of the above, White (2000) disconfirms the No Transfer/Full Access model, since L1 properties are generally found in L2 grammars, which provides evidence in favour of transfer. Moreover, Full Transfer/Partial Access and Partial Transfer/Partial Access theories are likely to be refuted as well because evidence for convergence between L2 and L1 grammars has been discovered, which supports Full Access. Consequently, based on White's (2000) conclusions, this paper will adopt the position of Full Access/Full Transfer proposed by Schwartz and Sprouse (1996) in an attempt to find out whether there is transfer of L1 parametric values in the initial state of L2A and parameter resetting in interlanguage development.

4. V-raising parameter

The Verb Raising Parameter is a two-valued variable that constrains different word orders across languages. This parameter is characterised by the movement of the lexical verb from its original V position to a higher functional category known as Inflection or Tense. As stated by White (2003: 128), "whether or not a finite verb raises overtly is determined by strength of features". In other words, languages who have a strong I feature trigger V-raising whereas languages who have a weak I feature do not require movement.

The structural differences between +V-raising and -V-raising languages are revealed in a range of constructions such as negation, adverb placement and questions (Pollock 1989). Therefore, the main syntactic differences that surface as a consequence of V-raising in a positive setting are post-verbal negation, post-verbal adverb placement and Subject-Verb inversion in interrogatives. On the contrary, the structure that surfaces

in languages with a negative V-raising setting are preverbal negation, preverbal adverb placement and SV order in interrogatives (White 2003).

4.1. V-raising in English

Many authors have agreed upon English being a -V-raising language because English I feature is weak and thus it does not trigger movement from V (Pollock 1989, White 1991, Eubank 1994, White 2003). This results in the compulsory adjacency of verb and object, which requires negation and adverbs to occupy a preverbal position (1a, 2a) and leads to ungrammaticality of postverbal negatives and adverbials (1b, 2b).

(1) a. I don't drink coffee.
b. *I drink not coffee.

(2) a. I always drink coffee.
b. *I drink always coffee.

Apart from negation and adverb placement, there is yet another structure that provides evidence in favour of English being a -V-raising language: interrogatives. In the case of questions, the subject must appear to the left of the lexical verb (3a). In other words, Subject-Verb inversion in English is ungrammatical, as shown in (3b).

(3) a. Do you drink coffee?
b. *Drink you coffee?

If examples (1a) and (3a) are analysed in detail, one may deduce that the lack of V-raising in English leads to *do*-insertion in negative sentences and questions with finite lexical verbs. In these two cases, the dummy element *do*, which may surface as *did* or *does*, is inserted so that checking requirements can be fulfilled and tense can be pronounced.

Another property related to V-raising in English that needs to be mentioned is the movement of auxiliaries and modals. As mentioned above, main finite verbs do not raise in English because it is a -V-raising language. However, as opposed to lexical verbs, auxiliaries do carry a strong I feature that triggers movement from their original position to I. Consequently, whenever there is an auxiliary or a modal present, it is ungrammatical to insert a dummy element *do* (4b, 5b). This is due to the fact that the auxiliary or modal in question already raises to I, so checking requirements are fulfilled and tense is already pronounced on them (4a, 5a).

(4) a. I haven't drunk coffee.

b. *I don't have drunk coffee.

(5) a. Have I drunk coffee?

b. *Do I have drunk coffee?

In summary, the negative setting of the V-raising parameter triggers a cluster of properties that have consequences in the surface structure of English sentences and their word order. First, adverbs are ungrammatical in postverbal position, i. e. they cannot appear between the verb and the object (if there is one). Second, negation is also ungrammatical in postverbal position, so it can only appear immediately before the lexical verb. Third, in interrogative sentences there is no subject-verb inversion, for which the subject must appear to the left of the main verb. Fourth, in negative and interrogative sentences where there is no auxiliary or modal, it is necessary to insert a dummy element *do* so that checking requirements can be fulfilled and tense can be pronounced. Finally, in cases of interrogative and negative sentences with an auxiliary or modal, there is no need for *do*-support because the auxiliary or modal in question already raises to I.

4.2. V-raising in Spanish

The analysis of the V-raising parameter in Spanish is complex because this language allows for some properties typical of both -V-raising and +V-raising languages. For this reason, Ayoun (1999b) suggests that Spanish could be considered a 'mixed language' in relation to this parameter. The term 'mixed' or 'hybrid' refers to languages which exhibit "partially coexisting settings in that they allow both parametric settings for the different structures subsumed under a given parameter" (Ayoun 2005: 144).

On the one hand, negative sentences in Spanish provide evidence against V-raising because negative markers such as *no* immediately precede the lexical verb (6a). Consequently, placing the negative marker to the right of the main verb is ungrammatical in Spanish (6b). Therefore, the case of negation in Spanish supports lack of V-raising in this language.

6. (a) Marta no juega a futbol.

(b) *Marta juega no a futbol.

On the other hand, there are some other constructions that allow for both negative and positive settings of the exact same parameter. For instance, in sentences including an adverb, verb movement is optional. In other words, adverbs can be found both immediately before (7a) and after (7b) the main verb, and both word orders are grammatical in Spanish. However, in a study carried out by Sánchez and Camacho (2017) it was found out that even though postverbal and preverbal adverb placement is acceptable in Spanish, there is a preference towards V-Adv order.

7. (a) Juan siempre lee libros.

(b) Juan lee siempre libros.

In the case of interrogatives, Spanish allows for both positive and negative settings of the V-raising parameter as well. Hence, instances of both VSO (8a) and SVO (8b) word orders might be encountered in questions in Spanish.

8. (a) ¿María viene mañana?

(b) ¿Viene María mañana?

In summary, while it is evident that English is a -V-raising language because lexical verbs fulfil all the requirements of a negative setting for this parameter, there is not so much consistency in the case of Spanish. This is due to the fact that it adopts a -V-raising structure in negative sentences, but allows for both positive and negative settings in adverb placement and Subject-Verb inversion in interrogatives. For this reason, it is accurate to characterise Spanish as a mixed or hybrid language, since it does not adopt completely either of the settings but rather "instantiates surface structures both with and without movement" (Ayoun 2005: 147).

	English	Spanish
Negation	-V-Raising	-V-Raising
Adverb Placement	-V-Raising	-V-Raising/+V-Raising
Subject-Verb Inversion in Interrogatives	-V-Raising	-V-Raising/+V-Raising

Table 1. Verb Movement Properties in English and Spanish**.** (Adapted from Ayoun 2005)

5. Research Questions

Based on the predictions made by Schwartz and Sprouse's (1996) in favour of the Full Transfer/Full Access model, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: Do Spanish pre-A1 learners of English accept sentences where verbs appear before adverbs in English? Does their degree of acceptance support L1 transfer in the initial stage of L2A?

RQ2: Do Spanish B2 learners of English accept sentences where verbs appear before adverbs in English? Does their lower degree of acceptance support UG access and parameter resetting in interlanguage development?

My hypothesis is that, since Spanish allows for both the positive and negative setting of the V-raising parameter, learners in the initial stage of L2A will transfer both values to English whereas students in later stages will restrict their L2 grammar to just the negative setting. In other words, I expect pre-A1 learners to accept VAO and B2 students to refuse it. If this is the case, evidence in favour of the Full Access/Full Transfer model will be encountered.

6. Research Methodology: Testing the V-Raising Parameter

6. 1. Participants

The present study examines L1 transfer and UG access, variables which are directly related to early and later stages of L2A respectively. Consequently, two experimental groups and two control groups have been assessed.

The first experimental group is comprised of 14 bilingual Spanish and Catalan native speakers. They are between 6 and 8 years old and are in 1st or 2nd grade of primary school. They have been studying English for two years on average, and they have been exposed to this language both at school and in weekly private English lessons. They have a starter, pre-A1 level of English.

The corresponding control group is comprised of 6 English native speakers who were born and live in England. They are 8 years old and are in 3rd grade of primary school. They are monolinguals.

The second experimental group is comprised of 14 bilingual Spanish and Catalan native speakers. They are between 15 and 16 years old and are in 4th grade of high school. They have been attending private English lessons for between 5 and 12 years, and they have been exposed to this language at school for 10 years approximately. They have a B2 level of English.

The corresponding control group is comprised of 4 English native speakers who were born and live in England. They are 15 years old and are in 10th grade, which is the equivalent for 4th grade of high school in Spain. They are monolinguals.

The participants have been divided into two groups according to age and level of English. On the one hand, group A includes the youngest experimental and control group. On the other hand, group B includes the oldest experimental and control group. This distinction has been made so that the results of group A and group B can be analysed in relation to L1 transfer and UG access respectively.

6. 2. Task and Procedure

All groups have been tested by means of a written survey which can be consulted in the *Appendix*. The survey starts with a brief sociolinguistic questionnaire followed by an acceptability judgement task. In this task, the participants were requested to label a list of sentences as good, neutral or bad depending on how they sounded to them in terms of word order. The tasks for group A and group B differ slightly in the number of sentences they include and the complexity of their structures and vocabulary. In both cases we find 5 AVO sentences such as (9a) for group A and (10a) for group B, which are grammatical in English and Spanish; and 5 VAO sentences such as (9b) for group A and (10b) for group B, which are ungrammatical in English but grammatical in Spanish. The only quantitative difference between the two tasks is that task A contains 3 distractors whereas task B contains 5. In terms of format, there is yet another difference between the two tasks. Although in both of them participants had to classify sentences into good, neutral and bad, task B included the actual written words of the labels whereas task B contained emojis so that the activity would be easier and more enjoyable for the youngest participants.

9. (a) John often plays football.
(b) *John plays often football.

10. (a) John always washes his teeth in the morning.
(b) *John washes always his teeth in the morning.

When it comes to the procedure, the test for the two experimental groups was carried out in the same way. They were provided with the material and the instructions for the task during their private English lessons. Whereas the youngest group needed 30 minutes to finish the survey, the oldest group completed it in 10 minutes approximately.

The participants of both groups answered the questionnaire individually. Nevertheless, while the oldest group completed the survey without any kind of assistance, the youngest group required some additional help with the comprehension of both the instructions and the meaning of the sentences.

As regards the control groups, the survey was sent to the participants' parents via email and it was carried out online due to Coronavirus restrictions and health measures. In this case, the participants were provided with the material and instructions for the task during their spare time at home. The members of both groups answered the survey individually.

The aim of this judgement acceptability task was to test the participants' perception of AVO and VAO sentences, and check whether they considered them acceptable or not. Moreover, the distinctions made between younger and older participants as well as natives and non-natives were relevant for the analysis of the data because they shed light on whether L1 properties are transferred to L2 grammars and whether L2 competence converges or diverges from native competence. The results of the study are presented in the following section.

6. 3. Results

As previously explained, this study draws its data from a total of 28 bilingual Spanish and Catalan native speakers and 10 English native speakers, which have been divided into two groups. As for group A, a total of 200 sentences relevant for the study were obtained. Regarding group B, 180 sentences were taken into consideration for the analysis. For both groups, the sentences have been analysed according to two variables.

The first variable considers whether the participant is English native or learner, and the second variable examines whether the sentence is AVO or VAO.

From the total of 200 sentences labelled by group A, 140 were judged by learners and 60 were assessed by natives. Unsurprisingly, their judgements regarding AVO sentences are relatively similar while their assessment of VAO sentences differs significantly. As for AVO structures, learners and natives found acceptable 70% and 90% of them respectively, which in both cases includes the vast majority. The remainder of the sentences was classified in such a way that learners labelled 23% of the sentences as 'neutral' and 7% as 'bad', whereas natives labelled 7% as 'neutral' and 3% as 'bad'.

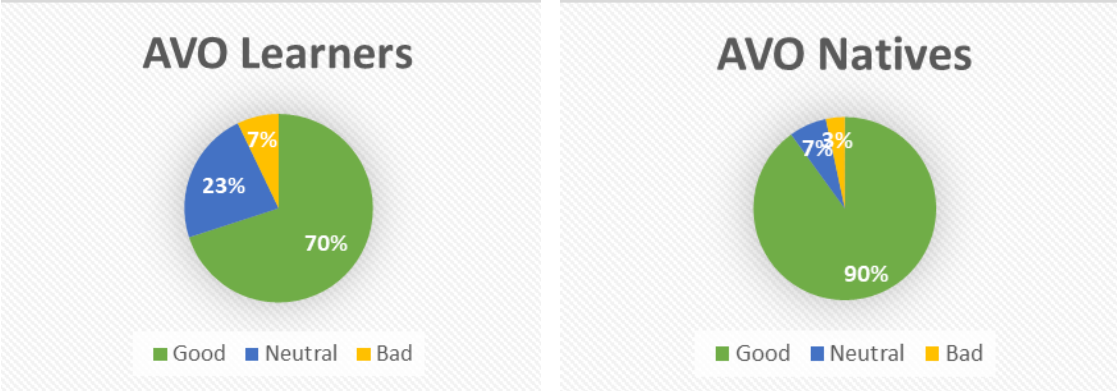

Figure 1. Acceptability of AVO structures by starter learners of English.

As observed in *Figure 2*, the judgements made by natives and non-natives on VAO structures do not coincide, but are rather contraposed. The vast majority of VAO sentences are accepted by learners (71%) whereas natives consider them generally neutral (56%) but also significantly bad (37%). It is worth highlighting that only a small percentage was labelled as completely bad by learners (9%). On the contrary, natives categorised a considerably small number of VAO sentences as 'good' (7%).

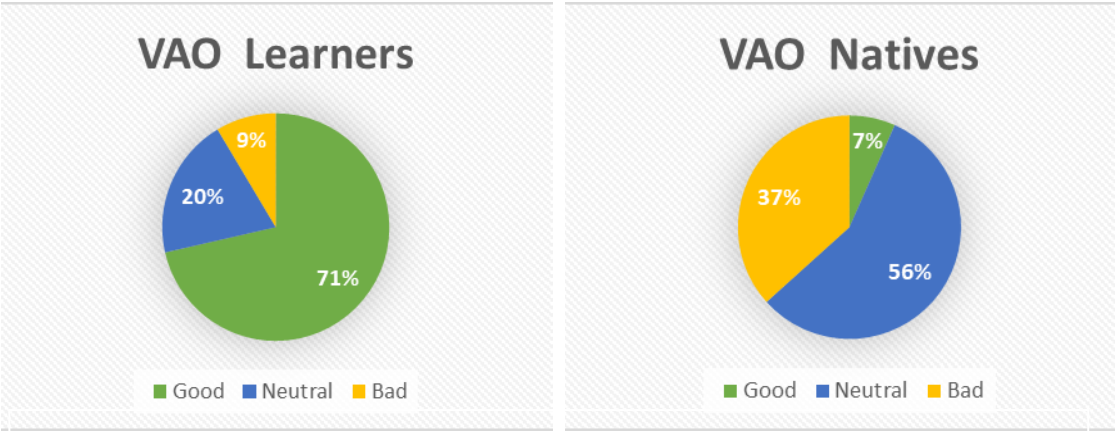

Figure 2. Acceptability of VAO structures by starter learners of English.

When it comes to group B, from the total of 180 sentences, 140 were assessed by learners whereas 40 were judged by natives. In this case, the assessment of both AVO and VAO structures is remarkably similar. As regards AVO, learners accepted 94% of the sentences and natives considered 80% of them acceptable. In both cases, these high percentages constitute the vast majority. As for the rest of the sentences, it is worth mentioning that even though natives categorised some of the AVO sentences as 'neutral' (20%), they did not consider any of them to be unacceptable. In contrast, a particularly small percentage (3%) was classified as 'bad' by learners.

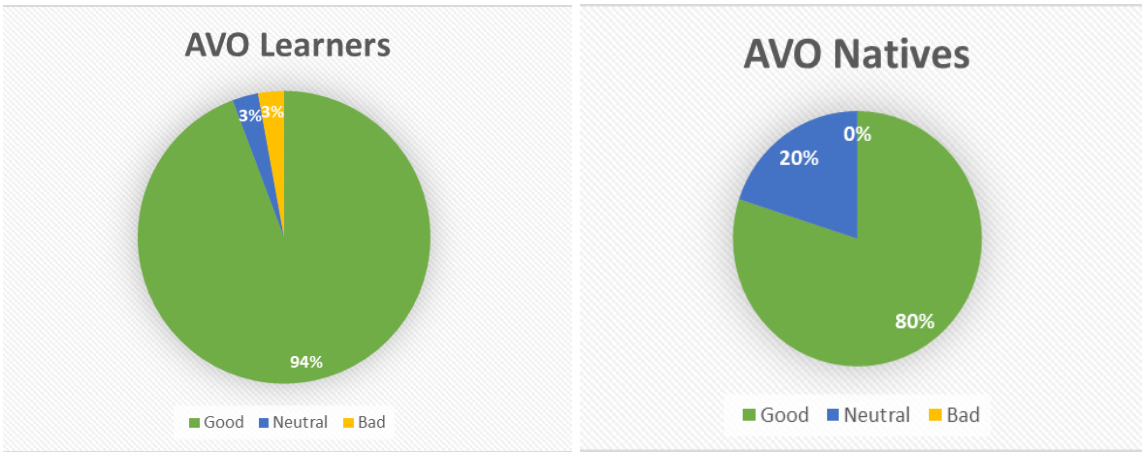

Figure 3. Acceptability of AVO structures by B2 learners of English.

Regarding VAO structures, the judgements made by learners and natives substantially coincide as well. In fact, the percentage attributed to VAO sentences labelled

as ‘bad’ is nearly the same: 89% for learners and 90% for natives. However, the distribution of the remainder of the sentences differs slightly. As shown in *Figure 4*, whereas learners categorised 11% of the sentences as ‘neutral’, natives rated a 5% of the VAO sentences as ‘neutral’ and the other 5% as ‘bad’.

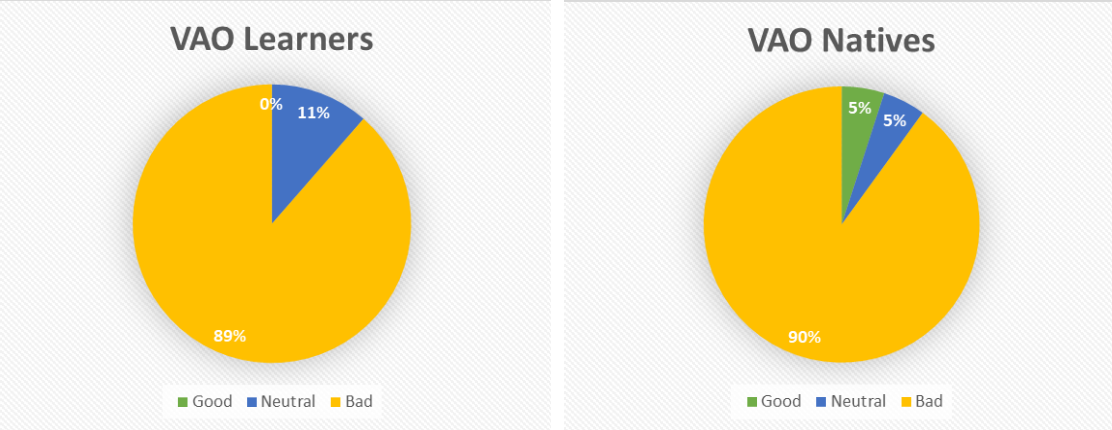

Figure 4. Acceptability of VAO structures by B2 learners of English.

7. Discussion

This study constitutes evidence for two major findings. On the one hand, Spanish starter learners of English generally find both AVO and VAO structures acceptable in English, whereas their native counterparts accept AVO but discard VAO. On the other hand, Spanish B2 learners of English label AVO sentences as acceptable and VAO sentences as unacceptable, results which converge with the outcome of the corresponding control group’s performance.

When it comes to group A, whose participants are the youngest and have the lowest English level in this study, my hypothesis on Full Transfer made the right predictions. This is due to the fact that the experimental group accepted both AVO and VAO structures in English because they are both acceptable in Spanish, their L1. However, since AVO corresponds to the negative setting of the V-raising parameter and VAO is linked to its positive value, only AVO sentences are grammatical in English,

which is a -V-raising language. For this reason, the control group coincides with the experimental group in their judgements on AVO structures, but differs with it in relation to VAO word orders, since they find them unacceptable. Hence, these results provide evidence in favour of Full Transfer because native speakers of Spanish, which is a mixed language regarding V-raising, accept both positive and negative settings of this parameter in English sentences, which suggests that its values in their L1 have been transferred to the structures instantiated in their L2, at least in their initial stage of L2A.

It is noteworthy, however, that there are other differences between the results from the youngest control and experimental groups. For instance, in their analysis on AVO sentences, although both groups label the vast majority as acceptable, the percentage is relatively higher for the control group, since learners consider 70% acceptable whereas natives accept a 90%. This difference could be due to the fact that, since Spanish native speakers accept not only AVO but also VAO, they labelled some particular AVO constructions as 'bad' because they would prefer a VAO order for those specific sentences. This possible preference could also be the reason why learners attributed a higher percentage (23%) to neutral AVO sentences whereas natives restricted this label to just a 7%.

In relation to VAO structures, there are other differences which are worth drawing attention to. The first contrast is found between the label attributed to the highest percentage by each group. While learners label 71% of the VAO sentences as 'good', natives consider 56% of these structures to sound 'neutral'. My hypothesis predicted that natives would classify the majority of VAO sentences as 'bad', and even though this label gets a relatively high percentage (37%), it does not constitute the majority. The fact that natives opt for 'neutral' instead of 'bad' as the most answered label cannot be accounted for by the hypothesis presented in this study. However, it could be due to a lack of

understanding of the instructions of the exercise or the sentences, or to an incapacity to rule out VAO sentences completely, since this control group is comprised of young acquirers of English who are not fully competent or proficient in their L1 yet.

The results of group B, whose members are the oldest and have the highest level of English in this study, are also accounted for by my hypothesis, which predicted Full Access in interlanguage development. This is due to the fact that, in this case, the assessments made by both the control group and the experimental group are considerably similar. On the one hand, the two groups labelled the vast majority of AVO sentences as 'good'. On the other hand, both learners and natives attributed the highest percentage of VAO sentences to the category 'bad'. These results are significant for this study because they provide evidence for convergence in L2A. In other words, the judgements made by Spanish starter learners of English on VAO sentences, which diverge from those made by natives, are remarkably different from the judgements made by Spanish B2 learners of English, which converge with those made by their control group. This may be due to the fact that even though the final state of an L1 constitutes the initial state of an L2, learners have access to UG in L2A and hence can reset parameters. For this reason, Spanish starter learners of English accept VAO structures, since they transfer the positive value of the V-raising parameter, whereas B2 learners label them as unacceptable, for they have already reset the parameter to its negative value, leading to a competence that is native-like at least to a certain extent. It is worth highlighting that the participants' success in resetting the V-raising parameter to its target value is directly linked to the teacher's success in transmitting their grammatical knowledge to their students. In other words, the processes of L2A as well as parameter resetting are guided and influenced by the quality of the teaching and the input provided, which in this study have been proven to be favourable.

Even though the results provided by both the experimental and the control group are substantially similar, there is a number of minor differences that are worth highlighting. For example, although both learners and natives categorised the vast majority of AVO sentences as 'good', the distribution of their percentages are slightly different. The experimental group found a 94% of the AVO structures acceptable whereas the control group accepted an 80%. The reason why native participants accepted a lower percentage of AVO sentences could be that those structures did not sound good to them not because of the position of the adverb but for some other reason. As regards the remaining percentages of AVO structures, it is remarkable that the control group did not consider any of the AVO sentences fully ungrammatical, whereas the experimental group labelled a 3% as 'bad', which suggests that learners might not have a fully native-like competence, at least in these circumstances. However, natives classified 20% of the AVO structures as 'neutral' while learners only attributed another 3% to this label. The fact that the control group categorised such a relatively high number of AVO sentences as neutral could be correlated to the reason why they did not attribute a higher percentage to the label 'good'. In other words, it could be hypothesised that native participants labelled 20% of the AVO sentences as neutral, not because of the position of the adverb or their ungrammaticality, but because they did not sound completely acceptable to them in terms of other components of language such as the vocabulary employed.

In relation to VAO structures, learners and natives made particularly similar judgements. They rejected the vast majority of VAO sentences with almost the same percentage, 89% for learners and 90% for natives. The fact that this value coincides is significantly relevant for this study because it demonstrates that natives and non-natives have a comparable grammatical competence at least in terms of V-raising. As regards the remainder of the sentences, it is remarkable that learners did not categorise any of the

VAO sentences as 'good', which provides further evidence in favour of parameter resetting. In contrast, natives labelled a 5% of the VAO structures as 'good'. It is worth mentioning that this 5% corresponds to just one VAO sentence being accepted, which constitutes a small amount of evidence. Nevertheless, it could be argued that the fact that a native speaker did not accept a VAO sentence could be due to a lack of understanding of the instructions of the task, or to their finding the sentence unacceptable for a reason other than the position of the adverb.

In summary, the data collected in this study supports the two hypotheses presented in section 5. On the one hand, the judgements made by native and non-native members of group A on VAO sentences are essentially different. This is due to the fact that the members of experimental group A accept VAO structures because they transfer the positive value of the V-raising parameter set in their L1, whereas the members of control group A do not accept VAO sentences because English is a -V-raising language and hence they find them ungrammatical. Consequently, the results obtained by group A support Full Transfer. On the other hand, the judgements made by native and non-native members of group B are substantially similar, which provides evidence for both convergence and potential native-like competence by L2 learners, i. e. it supports Full Access.

8. Conclusion

As mentioned in section 3, within the generative framework of language acquisition, several proposals have been made in relation to whether there is L1 transfer and UG access in L2A. In line with Schwartz and Sprouse's (1994, 1996) proposal on Full Transfer/Full Access, the aim of this study was to find out whether there is transfer of parametric values in the initial state of L2A and parameter resetting in interlanguage

development. Concretely, the focus of this study was Verb-raising parameter resetting by bilingual Spanish and Catalan learners of English. Since L1 transfer and UG access are variables that affect different stages of L2A, participants were divided into two groups according to age and level of English, as stated in section 6.1. The research methodology employed in the experiment was a survey containing an acceptability judgement task which consisted in assessing sentences that contained either a preverbal or a postverbal adverb. Acceptance of AVO structures was regarded as an indicator of the negative setting of the V-raising parameter whereas acceptance of VAO sentences was associated with its positive value. Overall, the results support Full Transfer/Full Access because bilingual Catalan and Spanish pre-A1 learners of English accept both AVO and VAO, which coincides with the values instantiated in their L1; whereas bilingual Catalan and Spanish B2 students of English accept AVO but discard VAO, which diverges from the Spanish and Catalan setting of the V-raising parameter but converges with its English value.

Even though the results of the experiment generally support my predictions made about L1 transfer and UG access as well as parameter resetting, it has its shortcomings in the analysis of small percentages attributed to labels which were not accounted for by my hypothesis, especially in relation to the judgements made by the control groups. For instance, the youngest control group labelled the majority of VAO structures as 'neutral', which differs from my hypothesis, which would have expected them to categorise VAO sentences as 'bad', since they are ungrammatical in English. Furthermore, in the assessment of AVO constructions made by the oldest control group, 20% of the sentences are assigned the label 'neutral', which is not accounted for by my hypothesis either, since I would have expected them to accept all AVO structures because they are grammatical. Hence, even though in section 7 I make some predictions about what might be the reasons

why my hypothesis does not completely coincide with the findings of the experiment, further research on this topic should be conducted in order to amend the hypothesis so that it accounts for all the significant results of this study. For example, the focus of the investigation could be widened by means of including not only an exhaustive analysis of L2A but also L1A and even child acquisition. If this was the case, it is likely that an explanation for differences not only between but also within control and experimental groups would be encountered.

Furthermore, this study could also be expanded in terms of sample size and scope. In other words, the same experiment could be conducted with a higher number of bilingual Catalan and Spanish students of English of other schools in order to prove whether their results coincide with those exposed in this thesis. Moreover, the investigation could also be extended to other languages or even other parameters in order to find out whether resetting takes places with parameters other than V-raising and with languages other than Spanish, Catalan and English. Finally, it could also be of interest to carry out an experiment similar to this one but with a production task rather than a comprehension task in order to find out whether there are any quantitative or qualitative differences between production and comprehension in the process of parameter resetting.

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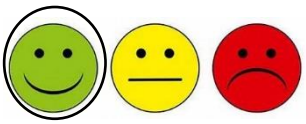
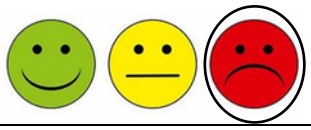
10. Appendix

10. 1. Task A

- NOM I COGNOMS:
- EDAT:
- CURS:
- NIVELL:
- QUINES LLENGÜES PARLES?
- QUANTS ANYS PORTES ESTUDIANT ANGLÈS?

LLEGEIX LES SEGÜENTS FRASES I ENCERCLA UNA DE LES EMOTICONES SEGONS SI ET SONA MILLOR O PITJOR EN ANGLÈS.

AQUÍ TENS DOS EXEMPLES DEL QUE HAS DE FER:

THE DOG IS BLACK.	
THE DOG BLACK IS.	

ARA ET TOCA A TU ENCERCLAR!

1. JOHN OFTEN PLAYS FOOTBALL.	
2. JAMES LISTENS NORMALLY TO MUSIC.	
3. ELIZABETH RUNS VERY FAST.	
4. ALICE SOMETIMES PLAYS THE GUITAR.	
5. JOHN PLAYS OFTEN FOOTBALL.	
6. JAMES NORMALLY LISTENS TO MUSIC.	

7. HANNAH LIKES ENGLISH CLASSES.	
8. CHARLES READS USUALLY BOOKS.	
9. SARAH ALWAYS GOES TO SCHOOL.	
10. CHARLES USUALLY READS BOOKS.	
11. MIKE IS VERY HAPPY.	
12. SARAH GOES ALWAYS TO SCHOOL.	
13. ALICE PLAYS SOMETIMES THE GUITAR.	

10. 2. Task B

- Name and Surnames:
- Age:
- Course:
- Level:
- What languages do you speak?
- For how long have you been studying English?

Read the following sentences and mark with a cross the option that you consider most adequate depending on how the sentence sounds to you (good, neutral, or bad).

Here you have two examples:

Mark plays football on Wednesdays.	Good ■	Neutral □	Bad □
Mark on Wednesdays football plays.	Good □	Neutral □	Bad ■

Now it's your turn!

1. John always washes his teeth in the morning.	Good □	Neutral □	Bad □
2. Sarah closed suddenly the door.	Good □	Neutral □	Bad □
3. Elisabeth likes riding her bike on Thursdays.	Good □	Neutral □	Bad □
4. Charles eats usually cereals for breakfast.	Good □	Neutral □	Bad □
5. Alice buys often chocolate for her sister.	Good □	Neutral □	Bad □
6. Hannah will finish the project tomorrow.	Good □	Neutral □	Bad □
7. Mary never talks about her boyfriend.	Good □	Neutral □	Bad □
8. Sarah suddenly closed the door.	Good □	Neutral □	Bad □
9. Mike has been in love with Susan since he was a child.	Good □	Neutral □	Bad □
10. John washes always his teeth in the morning.	Good □	Neutral □	Bad □
11. Charles usually eats cereals for breakfast.	Good □	Neutral □	Bad □
12. James wants to work as a teacher in the near future.	Good □	Neutral □	Bad □
13. Mary talks never about her boyfriend.	Good □	Neutral □	Bad □
14. Marina has passed all the exams.	Good □	Neutral □	Bad □
15. Alice often buys chocolate for her sister.	Good □	Neutral □	Bad □